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"To aid the cause of Virtue and Religion."

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A PLEA FOR RELIGION AND THE SACRED WRITINGS.

THERE are few ages of the world, which have not produced various instances of persons who have treated the divine dispensations, either with neglect or scorn. Of these, some have persisted in their folly to the latest period of their earthly existence; while others have discovered their mistake in time, and both sought and found forgiveness with God. In most ages there have been some, who have piously observed the manifestations of Heaven; who have cordially received the Holy Scriptures as a revelation from on high; and who have built their everlasting expectations upon the salvation which is therein revealed. The hopes of such persons have never been disappointed. If they have lived up, in any good degree, to their religious profession, they have been favoured with peace of mind, and strong consolation in life; firm confidence in Christ, at the hour of death; and have frequently gone off the stage of time into eternity rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, with unspeakable and triumphant joy.—But how extremely different, is the last end of those persons, who have denied and scorned the revelations of heaven; who have rejected the sacred writings; and treated serious godliness with sneer and contempt?—Nay, it has frequently been known, that the first-rate geniuses, and greatest men of their times, have left the world under much darkness of mind, full of doubts and fearful apprehensions concerning the divine favour, owing to their being too deeply immersed in secular, or literary pursuits; to their living beneath their Christian privileges; and spending too small a portion of their time in devout retirement, and religious exercises. Nothing, indeed, can keep the life of God

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vigorously alive in the soul, but these exercises. Where they are wholly neglected, or frequently interrupted, there the power of religion languishes. Faith and hope, peace and love, joy in, and confidence towards God, grow weak; doubts and fears, disquietude of mind, and scruples of conscience prevail. The sun goes down, and sets, to this world at least, under a dark and cheerless cloud.—But where the humble believer in Christ Jesus lays aside every spiritual incumbrance, and the sin which hath been accustomed too easily to overcome him; where he resolutely breaks through every snare, and lives to the great purposes for which we all were born; who spends a due proportion of every day in private prayer, meditation, and reading the sacred volume; he usually hath large enjoyment of the consolations of religion, and abounds in peace and hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. He goes through life, if not smoothly and usefully, at least contentedly and happily. While, in the eyes of those persons, who boast of their superiority of understanding, and freedom from vulgar prejudices, the Redeemer of the world becomes daily more and more contemptible; and in the eyes of the lukewarm christian less and less desirable; in the estimation of the devout and lively believer, who, by waiting upon the Lord, renews his strength, the Son of God, in his person, offices and work, appears, with increasing affection the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Being convinced of sin, and justified by faith, he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him. He is strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, and Christ dwells in his heart by faith. Being rooted and grounded in love, he comprehends with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and he knows the love of Christ, though indeed it passeth knowledge. He is filled with all the communicable fulness of God, and a peace passing understanding keepeth his heart and mind, through Christ Jesus.

"A christian dwells, like Uriel, in the sun :

Meridian evidence puts doubt to flight ;

And ardent hope anticipates the skies."

The language of his soul, is, Whom have I in heaven but thee, O God ? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee. To do unto others as he would have them do unto him, is the great law of his life, in all his dealings between man and man ; and wherein-soever he falls short of a full compliance with this royal statute, he laments and bewails his folly ; makes satisfaction according to the nature of the case ; flees to the blood of sprinkling for pardon ; and returns with renewed vigour to the path of duty. Giving all diligence, he adds to his faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity. With zealous affection he cultivates the holy tempers that were in Christ ; bowels of mercy, lowliness, meekness, gentleness, contempt of the world, patience, temperance, long-suffering, a tender love to every human being, bearing, believing, hoping, enduring all things. He loves with peculiar affection the whole brother-hood of believers in Christ Jesus. He endeavours to acquit himself with propriety in every station, whether as master, servant, parent, child, magistrate, subject, teacher, learner. In short ; whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, to these he attends with the utmost diligence and assiduity. This is the christianity, which the Son of God taught unto the world. And he that is of this religion is my brother, my sister, and my mother.

But this is not the religion of the great body of persons calling themselves Christians. Many of our brethren are extremely immoral. Others are guilty of some particular vice only. Some are decent in their general conduct, and attentive to religious obser-

vances, but total strangers to inward religion. Great advocates for their own party, they harbour a strong aversion to all who dare to think for themselves, and presume to dissent from them in principle or practice. So remote are they from the character and experience of the above evangelical requirements, that they consider them as delusive and enthusiastic. Something of the form of godliness they have gotten, but they deny, and sometimes even ridicule the power. Be this as it may, true religion is still the same ; and the above is a scriptural sketch of it, whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear. So far are we christians from being ashamed of this gospel-method of saving a lost world, that we make it our boast and song all the day through in the house of our pilgrimage.

“ I'll praise my Maker with my breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler pow'rs ;
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life, or thought, or being last,
Or immortality endures.”

We experience its effect in raising us from the ruins of our fall. We lament with sincere contrition the sins and follies of our unregenerate state. We discover nothing but condemnation, while we remain under the covenant of works. We flee for refuge to the only hope of sinful men ; and we consider ourselves as the happiest of God's creatures, in having this plank thrown out, on which we are permitted to escape safe to land. In the mean time we feel that this religion makes us easy, comfortable, happy ; and seems adapted with consummate wisdom, to our state and circumstances.

“ Soft peace she brings, wherever she arrives,
She builds our quiet as she forms our lives ;
Lays the rough paths of peevish nature ev'n,
And opens in each breast a little heav'n.”

This is the portion of happiness, which the gospel yields us while we live, and we have not the smallest fear that it will fail us when we die : for we know, that our light affliction in this world, which is comparatively, but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; and that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

“ Nothing on earth we call our own,
But, strangers, to the world unknown,
We all their goods despise :
We trample on their whole delight,
And seek a country out of sight,
A country in the skies.”

If then the religion of Jesus Christ be a delusion, it is a happy delusion, and even a wise man would scarcely wish to be undeceived. He would rather be ready to say with Cicero, when speaking of the immortality of the soul :—“ If in this I err, I willingly err ; nor, while I live, shall any man wrest from me this error, with which I am extremely delighted.”

THE WASTE OF LIFE.

BY WATTS.

ANERGUS was a young gentleman of a good estate, he was bred to no business, and could not contrive how to waste his hours agreeably ; he had no relish for any of the proper works of life, nor any taste at all for the improvements of the mind ; he spent generally ten hours of the four and twenty in his bed ; he dozed away two or three more on his couch, and as many were dissolved in good liquor every evening, if he met with company of his own humour. Five or six of the rest he sauntered away, with much indolence : The chief business of them was to contrive his meals, and to feed his fancy before-hand with the promise of a

dinner and a supper ; not that he was so very a glutton, or so entirely devoted to appetite ; but chiefly because he knew not how to employ his thoughts better, he let them rove about the sustenance of his body. Thus he had made a shift to wear off ten years since the paternal estate fell into his hands ; and yet, according to the abuse of words in our day, he was called a man of virtue, because he scarce ever was known to be quite drunk, nor was his nature much inclined to lewdness.

One evening as he was musing alone, his thoughts happened to take an unusual turn, for they cast a glance backward, and began to reflect on his manner of life. He bethought himself what a number of living beings had been made a sacrifice to support his carcass, and how much corn and wine had been mingled with those offerings. He had not quite lost all the arithmetic he had learned when he was a boy, and he set himself to conclude how much he had devoured since he came to the age of man.

“ Above a dozen feathered creatures, small and great, have one week with another (said he) given up their lives to prolong mine, which in ten years time amounts to at least six thousand.

“ Fifty sheep have been sacrificed in a year, with half a hecatomb of black cattle, that I might have the choicest part offered weekly upon my table. Thus a thousand beasts out of the flock and the herd have been slain in ten years time to feed me, besides what the forest and the park have supplied me with. Many hundreds of fishes have, in all their varieties, been robbed of life for my repast, and of the smaller fry as many thousands.

“ A measure of corn would hardly afford fine flour enough for a month's provision, and this arises to above six score bushels ; and many hogsheads of ale and wine, and other liquors, have passed through this body of mine, this wretched strainer of meat and drink.

“ And what have I done all this time for God or man? What a vast profusion of good things upon an useless life, and worthless liver? There is not the meanest creature among all these which I have devoured, but hath answered the end of its creation better than I. 'Twas made to support human nature, and it hath done so. Every shrimp and oyster I have eat, and every grain of corn I have devoured, hath filled up its place in the rank of beings with more propriety and honour than I have done: O shameful waste of life and time!”

In short, he carried on his moral reflections with so just and severe a force of reason, as constrained him to change his whole course of life, to break off his follies, at once, and to apply himself to gain some useful knowledge, when he was more than thirty years of age: He lived many following years, with the character of a worthy man, and an excellent christian; he performed the kind offices of a good neighbour at home, and made a shining figure as a patriot in the senate house; he died with a peaceful conscience in the faith and hope of the gospel, and the tears of his country were dropped upon his tomb.

The world, that knew the whole series of his life, stood amazed at the mighty change: They beheld him as a wonder of reformation, while he himself confessed and adored the divine power and mercy, which had transformed him from a brute to a man.

But this was a single instance; and we may almost venture to write miracle upon it. Are there not large numbers of both sexes among our young gentry, and among the families of quality, in a degenerate age, whose lives thus run to utter waste, without the least tendency to usefulness and reformation, and with a scorn of all repentance?

When I meet with persons of such a worthless character as this, it brings to my mind some scraps of Horace:

Nos numerus sumus, & fruges consumere nati.

———Alcinoique juvenus

Cui pulchrum fuit in medios dormire dies, &c.

PARAPHRASE.

There are a number of us creep
 Into this world, to eat and sleep;
 And know no reason why they're born,
 But merely to consume the corn,
 Devour the cattle, fowl and fish,
 And leave behind an empty dish;
 The crows and ravens do the same,
 Unlucky birds of hateful name;
 Ravens or crows might fill their place,
 And swallow corn and carcasses.
 Then, if their tomb-stone, when they die,
 Ben't taught to flatter and to lie,
 There's nothing better will be said,
 Than that, They've eat up all their bread,
 Drank up their drink, and gone to bed.

There are other fragments of that heathen poet, which occur on such occasions, one in the first of his satires, the other in the last of his epistles, which seem to represent life only as a season of luxury.

———Exactus contentus tempore vitæ,

Cedat uti conviva satur.———

Lusisti satis, edisti satis atque bibisti;

Tempus arbire tibi.

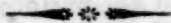
Which may be thus put into English:

Life's but a feast; and when we die,
 Horace would say, if he were by,
 Friend, thou hast eat and drank enough,
 'Tis time now to be marching off:

Then like a well-fed guest depart,
With cheerful looks, and ease at heart :
Bid all your friends good-night and say,
You've done the business of the day.

REFLECTION.

Deluded souls ! that sacrifice
Eternal hopes above the skies,
And pour their lives out all in waste,
To the vile idol of their taste !
The highest heaven of their pursuit
Is to live equal with the brute :
Happy, if they could die as well,
Without a Judge, without a hell !



THE CONVERSION OF LA HARPE,

A FRENCH PHILOSOPHER.

M. DE LA HARPE ranked high among the literati of France. His various works have rendered him popular as an author. He claims attention as the associate of Voltaire, D'Alembert, and Condorcet. During the greater part of his life, he was a disciple of the French philosophy, and an active and a zealous disseminator of its principles; and he affords, probably, the only instance of a convert made from that sect to Christianity. The circumstance which gives the most peculiar interest to his annals is his conversion, in advanced life, from French Infidelity to Christianity.

La Harpe hailed the commencement of the revolution in France ; and during the two first years of its course, he was its advocates. Under the reign of Terror he was arrested, and lodged in the Luxemburgh ; and in this situation he became very disconsolate. We are told that he did not feel his principles adapted to give relief, in the conjecture in which he found himself ; and a friend,

who was anxious for his welfare, requested him to peruse the Psalms of David. Into these compositions he had never before looked, except with a view to discover poetical beauties, and they were very little in his recollection. Fearful of offending the Philosopher, and of stumbling, as it were, at the threshold, his friend requested him to peruse them as a resource for killing time ; and in order to fix his attention more on the sacred compositions, he was requested to compose a purely literary comment on them, which conduct strikingly illustrates that Scripture apophthegm, " He that winneth souls is wise." He undertook it. Scarcely had he begun, before he discovered in the Psalms a number of beauties of a superior order : this persuasion continued to gain strength ; and farther perusal soon fortified it. From this commentary, originating in a mere regard to friendship, and afterwards pursued from pious zeal, was formed the preliminary discourse prefixed to his translation of the Psalter, the first work in which he announced his conversion. His own account of that memorable event, he gives in the following words.

" I was alone in my prison in a small dark chamber, very sorrowful. I had, for several days, been reading the Psalms, the Gospels, and some good books. Their effect had been rapid, though progressive. I was already restored to the faith, I saw a new light, but it terrified me in shewing me an abyss, that of forty years of error. I saw all the evil, but no remedy. Nothing around me offered to me the succour of religion. On one side, my life was before my eyes, such as it appeared by the torch of divine truth ; and on the other, death, such as was then inflicted, and which I expected every day. The Priest no longer appeared on the scaffold to comfort those who were about to die ; he no longer ascended it, except to die himself. Full of these distressing ideas, my heart had sunk within me ; it silently addressed itself to God, whom I had just found, and whom I scarcely yet knew. I besought him to shew me what I was to do, and what was to become of me. I had on my table the *Imitation*, and I had been

told that I should frequently find in that excellent book an answer to my thoughts. I opened it without any view to a particular place, and fell on these words: 'Behold me, my son, I come to thee because thou hast invoked me.' I read no more; the sudden impression which I experienced is beyond description; and it is not more possible to convey it in words than to forget it. I fell with my face on the ground, bathed in tears, almost suffocated, uttering inarticulate cries, and broken sentences. I perceived my heart lightened and dilated, yet, at the same time, ready to burst. A multitude of ideas and sentiments rushed on my mind; I wept for a long time; and I am without any recollection of the situation, except that it was something beyond comparison the most violent and the most transporting that my heart ever experienced. These words, 'Behold me, my son,' never ceased to sound in my ears, and forcibly to agitate my frame."

On being released from prison, the new convert resumed his lectures at the Lyceum; where he displayed all that zeal which is natural to that character. The sensation produced by this novelty, the ridicule which it provoked, and the persecutions which it drew on this confessor in the cause of religion, are well known to those who paid attention to events at Paris at that period. In what is termed the revolution of the 18th of Fructidor, La Harpe was obliged to flee, in order to escape deportation: but he found a secure and commodious asylum near Paris, where he composed a part of his *Fragments of an Apology for Religion*. Soon after his release from his last captivity, his health rapidly declined, and early in the year 1803, he closed his mortal career. His conversation, we are informed, was, in the highest degree, pious and edifying on the prospect of dissolution.

In his Preface to his Apology, the author makes this declaration: "I am not in a condition to instruct those who know any thing; my book is addressed to those who, like myself, have not to this moment been desirous of knowing any thing; and it has occurred to me, that the manner in which I have been instructed

might prove instructive to them. A heavenly voice, when I least thought of it, spoke to my heart, and said: *Take and read.* It was not the Apologists that were put into my hands; it was the Gospels, the Psalms, the Scriptures. They were not Grotius, Abadie, Houtteville, Crousaz, and Bergier, who enlightened me, or who were even the instruments of him who did enlighten me. They are absolutely unknown to me; not that I do not cordially believe them to merit the testimonies borne to them. But I have never, for a moment, felt any desire or need of reading them."

EXHORTATION.

THE precepts of the Redeemer's religion, are such as have been admired in all ages, and such as no man need feel himself ashamed to own. The substance of them is: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them: "A precept so held in admiration by one of the Roman emperors, that he had it inscribed in various public places to be seen and read of all men. This excellent laconic sentence is more expanded by our Lord himself in another place: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. And thy neighbor as thyself." And still more by Paul: "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men; teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godlily in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." May not I then exhort you in the words of the same Apostle: "To present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service? and not to be conformed to this world; but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what

is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God? Endeavour to be uniformly and conscientiously, inwardly and outwardly, religious. Lay aside all other thoughts and concerns, and let the pardon of your sins, the justification of your persons, the purification of your natures, and the salvation of your souls, be the grand business and aim of your life. Every thing within you, and every thing without you, will oppose this great regenerating process of religion. Remember, however, this is your main concern in the world. One thing alone is truly needful. Secure this, and every thing beside is safe.

“This done, the poorest can no wants endure:

“And this not done, the richest must be poor.”

EXAMPLES OF PIETY.

IT was the custom of Boerhaave, Sir John Barnard, and the Duke of Ormonde, to spend an hour every morning, in private prayer, and reading the holy scriptures; and of lord Capel to meditate half an hour every day upon eternity. This gave them comfort and vigour of mind to support the toil and fatigue of the day. We are told in the life of Ormonde, that he never prepared for bed, or went abroad in the morning, till he had withdrawn an hour to his closet.

Lord Harrington, who died, A. D. 1613, at the age of twenty-two years, was a young nobleman of eminent piety, and rare literary attainments. He was an early riser, and usually spent a considerable part of the morning in private prayer, and reading the sacred writings. The same religious exercise was also pursued both in the evening and at mid-day.

Sir Harbottle Grimstone, “was a very pious and devout man, and spent every day at least an hour in the morning, and as much at night, in prayer and meditation. And even in winter, when he was obliged to be very early on the bench, he took

care to rise so soon, that he had always the command of that time, which he gave to those exercises."

Colonel Gardner, used constantly to rise at four in the morning, and so spend "his time till six, in the secret exercises of devotion, reading, meditation and prayer. And if at any time he was obliged to go out before six in the morning, he rose proportionably sooner; so that when a journey or march has required him to be on horseback by four, he would always be at his devotion at farthest by two."

General Waller, was as devout in the closet as he was valiant in the field.

Washington was one of the first of warriors, the first of politicians, and the worthiest of men. He was the delight of an admiring and astonished world; and yet—hear it, O ye minute philosophers of this degenerate age—he was a serious christian!

These religious persons were men of great consideration in the world, who were engaged in extremely active scenes of life.

HAPPINESS, ONLY TO BE FOUND IN RELIGION.

If there be one condition in this life more happy than another, it is, surely, that of him, who founds all his hopes of futurity, on the promises of the gospel; who carefully endeavours to conform his actions to its precepts; looking upon the great God Almighty as his protector here, his rewarder hereafter, and his everlasting preserver. This is a frame of mind so perfective of our nature, that if Christianity, from the belief of which it can only be derived, were as certainly false, as it is certainly true, one could not help wishing, that it might be universally received in the world.

Poetry.

A CONSOLATORY THOUGHT AMIDST AFFLICTIONS AND CALAMITIES.

O YE! whom, struggling on Life's craggy road,
With obstacles and dangers, secret foes
Supplant, false friends betray, disastrous rage
Of elements, of war, of civil broil
Brings down to Poverty's cold floor,— while Grief
Preys on the heart, and dims the sinking eye;
Faint not! There is who rules the storm, whose hand
Feeds the young ravens, nor permits blind Chance
To close one sparrow's flagging wing in death.
Trust in the Rock of Ages. Now, e'en now
He speaks, and all is calm. Or if, to prove
Your inmost soul, the hurricane still spread
Its licensed ravages, He whispers hope,
Earnest of comfort, and thro' blackest night
Bids keen-ey'd Faith on Heav'n's pure sunshine gaze,
And learn the glories of her future home.

So, when the Son of Patience heard the wreck
Of all his fortune, camels, oxen, flocks,
Sons, daughters, all in one short hour o'erwhelm'd;
And ere each messenger his tale of grief
Had closed, beheld another still succeed,
With wilder eye-balls, cheeks more deadly pale,
More trembling lips, portending heavier woes:
When every limb thy cankering tooth, Disease,
Gnaw'd to the bone: when scoffing friends arraign'd
His uprightness: when she who should have pour'd
Balm on his wounds, his consort, mock'd his pangs
With venom'd taunt:—"Still dost thou boast thy faith?"

"Renounce the ungrateful Power thou serv'st in vain :
 "Defy his malice, shelter'd in the grave."——
 His head to earth the sufferer bow'd, with hands
 Prest on his bosom, yet his eyes uprais'd
 In hope to heaven. "Father of all," he cried,
 "Thy will be done ! All was thy gift ; thine own
 "Thou hast resumed. Blest be thy hand that gave ;
 "And—peace,—my heart !—blest when it takes away !
 "Yet these poor limbs, of swarming worms the spoil,
 "New life shall clothe, and rear them from the dust.
 "Thou livest, my Redeemer ! At the hour
 "In thy decrees ordain'd, careering clouds
 "Shall speak thine Advent : earth beneath thy tread
 "Shall shrink ; this voice shall hymn thy love, these knees
 "Adore thy power, these eyes behold their God !"

OPINION OF WAR.

ONE murder makes a Villain,
 Millions a Hero—Princes are privileged
 To kill, and numbers sanctify the crime.——
 Ah ! why will kings forget that they are men,
 And Men, that they are Brethren ! Why delight
 In human sacrifice—Why burst the ties
 Of nature, that should knit their souls together
 In one soft bond of amity and love !
 They yet still breath destruction, still go on
 Inhumanly ingenious to find out
 New pains for life—new terrors for the grave !
 Artifices of death ! Still Monarchs dream
 Of universal empire, growing up
 From universal ruin. Blast the design,
 Great GOD of Hosts—nor let thy creatures fall
 Unpitied victims at Ambition's shrine.